Amendments to the Claims

1-23 (Cancelled)

24. (New) A composition of matter comprising a water-soluble polysaccharide which contains functional groups which facilitate crosslinking the polysaccharide, the composition being made by the method comprising the steps of:

a) dissolving an alkali-metal salt of a polysaccharide in water to form a solution,

b) dispersing an acid in said solution, the acid including an anion,

c) enclosing the dispersion formed in step (b) within a semi-permeable membrane having a molecular weight cut-off at least large enough to pass said acid,

d) dialyzing the dispersion in water while the dispersion is so enclosed, and

e) harvesting a modified polysaccharide solution from within the semi-permeable membrane,

wherein the solution harvested in step (e) is substantially free of said anion, and

wherein the solution harvested in step (e) has a pH which is less than about 4.

25. (New) The composition of Claim 24, wherein the polysaccharide is a material selected from the group consisting of sodium hyaluronate, chondroitin sulfate, and sodium carboxymethyl cellulose.

26. (New) The composition of Claim 24, wherein the acid added in step (b) is an acid selected from the group consisting of hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, nitric acid, orthophosphoric acid, and oxalic acid.

27. (New) The composition of Claim 25, wherein the acid added in step (b) is an acid selected from the group consisting of hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, nitric acid, orthophosphoric acid, and oxalic acid.

28. (New) The composition of Claim 27, wherein the polysaccharide is sodium hyaluronate, and wherein the pH of the solution harvested in step (e) is about 3.0-3.5.

29. (New) The composition of Claim 27, wherein the polysaccharide is chondroitin sulfate, and wherein the pH of the solution harvested in step (e) is about 3.5-4.0.

30. (New) The composition of Claim 27, wherein the polysaccharide is sodium carboxymethyl cellulose, and wherein the pH of the solution harvested in step (e) is about 3.9.

31. (New) A modified form of hyaluronic acid, the hyaluronic acid being in the form of an aqueous solution, the hyaluronic acid including a plurality of carboxyl groups, wherein at least some of the carboxyl groups of the hyaluronic acid have been converted to a free carboxylic acid form, wherein the solution has a pH of less than about 4.0, and wherein the solution is substantially free of ions selected from the group consisting of chloride, sulfate, nitrate, phosphate, and oxalate.

32. (New) A modified form of hyaluronic acid, the hyaluronic acid being in the form of an aqueous solution, the hyaluronic acid including a plurality of carboxyl groups, wherein at least some of the carboxyl groups of the hyaluronic acid have been converted to a free carboxylic acid form by mixing the hyaluronic acid with a strong acid which dissociates to produce an anion within the solution, wherein the solution has a pH of less than about 4.0, and wherein the solution is substantially freed of any residue of said anion.

33. (New) The product of Claim 32, wherein the strong acid is selected from the group consisting of hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, nitric acid, orthophosphoric acid, and oxalic acid.

34. (New) A modified form of a polysaccharide, the polysaccharide being in the form of an aqueous solution, the polysaccharide including a plurality of functional groups which are bound to an alkali metal cation, wherein at least on some of the functional groups of the polysaccharide, the alkali metal cation has been replaced with a hydrogen ion, thus converting said functional groups to a free acid form, wherein the solution has a pH of less than about 4.0, and wherein the solution is substantially free of anions corresponding to any strong acid.